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TOP U.S. GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS MAKE WOMEN AND GIRLS FOCUS OF VISITS TO BANGLADESH

DHAKA, JANUARY 3 - - Congresswoman Betty McCollum, D-Minnesota, and Melanne Verveer, Ambassador-at-Large for Global Women's Issues, will both arrive in Bangladesh on January 4 to meet with government, community-based, and civil society leaders involved in advancing the rights and well-being of women and girls, and to promote U.S. policy on women, health and education. During their visits, Congresswoman McCollum and Ambassador Verveer will engage with host country officials and non-governmental organizations on such issues as maternal and child health, improving girls' access to education, child marriage, gender-based violence, trafficking in persons, and the role of women in climate change.

Congresswoman McCollum is a Democrat serving her sixth term in the United States Congress. She recently introduced legislation that declares child marriage to be a human rights abuse, and advocates for the elimination of child marriage as a U.S. foreign policy goal. In addition, the legislation would require the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) and the State Department to collect and publicize data on the prevalence of child marriage and its impact on key U.S. development goals.

In her capacity as director of the Department of State's office on Global Women's Issues, Ambassador Verveer coordinates foreign policy issues and activities relating to the political, economic and social advancement of women around the world. She mobilizes support for women's rights and political and economic empowerment through initiatives and programs designed to increase women's and girls' access to education and health care, to combat violence against women and girls in all its forms, and to ensure that women's rights are fully integrated with human rights in the development of U.S. foreign policy.

Ambassador Verveer will depart for Nepal on January 6. Congresswoman McCollum will continue her visit in Bangladesh until January 10.

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Note: A Bangla translation of this press release is also available at the American Center. If you are interested in the translation, please call the American Center Press Section, Tel: 8855500, Fax: 9885688; e-mail: DhakaPA@state.gov; Website: <http://dhaka.usembassy.gov>